

Headmistress Granted Bail in Diet Author's Murder

Self-Defense Plea Indicated; Lawyer Cites Client's Bruises

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. (UPI)—The headmistress of an exclusive Virginia girls school was released on \$40,000 bail today to await trial on a charge she shot and killed "Scarsdale Diet" author Dr. Herman Tarnower in the bedroom of his opulent suburban home.

Jean Harris, 56, of McLean, Va., who helped Tarnower write the best-seller that has sold nearly 3 million copies since its publication in January, 1979, did not appear at today's hearing, but five members of her family, including her two sons, were present.

Westchester County Court Judge John C. Couzens Jr. set the bail. Defense attorney Joel Aurnou revealed nothing of the circumstances that led to the fatal shooting on Tarnower's estate in Purchase, N.Y., late Monday night, but asked that Harris be given "immediate mental, medical attention."

"She is in a severe state of shock," Aurnou said.

Asst. Dist. Atty. Joseph Rakacky had asked the judge to deny bail. He noted Tarnower was shot four times, "ruling out any claim of self-defense. The weapon was brought to the scene by the defendant."

He said the killing apparently followed a "dispute that arose out of a personal relationship." He did not elaborate.

Police have said the bedroom of the Japanese-style mansion, where Tarnower was found bleeding from four gunshot wounds, was "in disarray after what appeared to be a struggle," and Harris had a noticeable bruise on her lip when she was arraigned Tuesday afternoon.

But authorities, who said she confessed to the shooting, refused to discuss a motive in the case, and Aurnou indicated only that his client would claim self-defense.

In addition to the lip bruise, Aurnou said, his client had another bruise on her face near her eye and a 7-inch "purple and green" bruise that stretched from her left elbow to her armpit.

Aurnou argued that the headmistress should be granted bail because she has roots in the community and owns property in Mahopac in nearby Putnam County. "Her reputation is absolutely flawless," he said.

Seated in the courtroom during the hearing were her two sons, David, 29, a banking officer in Yonkers, N.Y., and James, 27, a lieutenant in the Marine Corps; two sisters from Cleveland, and her brother, a Navy captain.

At her arraignment Tuesday, Harris, a slim blonde, sat wearing a mink coat, slacks and a sweater. She chatted amiably with police officers and paused to gesture at reporters who jammed the courtroom. "Do these people have nothing better to do?" she asked.

Aurnou described his client, headmistress of the Madeira School in Greenway, Va., as a "charming lady" who had been a friend of Tarnower "for a number of years." He said "she was not unexpected" at the Tarnower house on the night of the shooting.

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SUSPECT -Jean Harris after her
arrest on charge of murder.

AP photo